



Indian Affairs in the North West

DELIVERED BY

HON. DR. SCHULTZ, M. P.,

IN THE

House of Commons of Canada, 31st March. 1873.

(From the "Ottawa Times.")

Dr. Schultz moved, seconded by Mr. Bowell, that an humble address be presented to His Excellency the Governor General, for copies of all correspondence from Indians and others in the Province of Manitoba with the Government, on the subject of the dissatisfaction prevailing among the Chiefs, Headmen, and Indians, treated with in Manitoba and adjacent Territories in the year 1871.

Dr. Schultz, in moving this address, said:—

I have made this motion Mr. Speaker, mainly to enable me to place before this Honorable House, some facts in connection with the Indians of the North West, which I trust will be considered of sufficient importance, at least to lead Honorable Gentlemen to investigate for themselves, a subject which for the first time, has become a really important one in this country.

While every-one felt pleased when the long negotiations between Canada and the Hudson Bay Company drew to a close, and proud of the Imperial Proclamation of 15th July, 1870, which added 3,000,000 square miles, to the area of the Dominion; few remembered however at the time, that this territory had a population of 68,000 Indians, whose rights by the conditions of the transfer we were bound to recognize, and to whose care and protection we were firmly pledged.

These Indians were as yet, lords of the soil, their rights, at least in their own Country, none disputed, and yet while people grumbled at the one million and a half, which was paid by us to extinguish the intangible title of the Hudson Bay Company, and regretted that this Corporation should have been allowed to retain

one-twentieth of all the land, together with large special reserves around their posts, few reflected that the money paid the Hudson Bay Company, was really thrown away, and that we must yet buy from those who owned and possessed them, the very lands that we were so graciously giving this Company, the one-twentieth of

Still for better or for worse, the deed is done, the bargain concluded, the money paid, and the responsibilities incurred, and Canada appreciating the future which awaits her, has grappled with the question of filling these newly acquired valleys, with the teeming population of the old world; we have projected Railways over them, and Canals through them; we have taken steps to make the rocks yield their rich and varied contents, and the rivers their golden sands. Discussion after discussion, has taken place in this House, from apparently every possible point of view in regard to the development of this region, but I totally fail to remember one single word, that would indicate the slightest consideration for those who are now happy and content on its hunting grounds, and to whom the carrying out of these projects means, unless a wise legislation interferes, gradual but inevitable destruction. Population and Railway communication we must have, but let us never forget that the cuttings of the Railroad, will desecrate many an Indian burying ground, and that the plough of the settlers along its line, will pass through many an Indian hearth, that is bright with fire to day.

At this moment there is a condition of profound peace among the Indian tribes north of the international boundary. In any part of this vast region the life of a white man is safe; no lodge would refuse him its shelter, and its food would be shared without the expectation of reward. They are absolute lords as yet of their hunting grounds; the half-breeds, it is true, are allowed to participate as a right in common with themselves, but parties of Englishmen and others, hunting for pleasure, are compelled to pay a royalty for the privilege, to those masters of the soil. I mention the fact, Sir, of the state of peace which exists among the British Indians because of its contrast to the state of affairs in the Indian country of the United States. There, the most ordinary surveying party has to be protected by a strong detachment of troops, and a condition of things exist which would seem to show that all faith between the contracting parties to treaties has passed away, and that the cruel strife will only end when the last Indian has uttered his death cry.

Honorable gentlemen will admit that the contrast is great, and

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I respectfully submit that there is no public question of the day more worthy of the consideration of this House than the determination of a policy which will ensure a continuance of the peace which exists, and the avoidance of those Indian wars which are always characterized by brutal outrages, and enormous expense. Allow me to cite one instance only, among the many such which have occurred in the United States: West of the Red River, and south of the boundary line is the country of the Sioux Indians, corresponding to our Cree tribe, who occupy a similar geographical position on our side of the boundary. These tribes are about equal in numbers; both are Indians of the prairie, practiced horsemen and excellent shots. Ten years ago, this tribe of Sioux were in as profound a state of peace with the United States as the Crees are now with us; but a grievance had been growing; the conditions of their treaties had not been carried out; remonstrances to their agents had been pigeon-holed in official desks; warnings from half-breeds and traders who knew their language had been pooh-poohed by the apostles of red tape, till, suddenly, the wail of the massacre of '63 echoed through the land. Western Minnesota was red with the blood of the innocent, and for hundreds of miles the prairie horizon was lit with burning dwellings, in which the shriek of childless women had been silenced by the tomahawk of the savage. The military power of the United States was of course called into requisition; but the movement of regular troops was slow, while that of the Indian was like the "pestilence which stalks in darkness." Where least expected; where farthest removed from military interference; in the dead of night, they appeared, and the morning sun rose on the ghastly faces of the dead, and the charred remains of their once happy homes.

Trained soldiers, in the end, overcame the savage; but not until a country as large as Nova Scotia had been depopulated; not until the terror had diverted the stream of foreign immigration to more southern fields, and not until three military expeditions, on three successive years, had traversed the Indian country, at an expenditure to the United States Government of ten millions of dollars, and necessitated since that time the maintenance of ten military posts, with permanent garrisons of three thousand men.

It needs, Sir, no argument to show that in Indian difficulties of this sort, prevention is better than cure. Americans admit that this tribe of Sioux were the best, when fairly treated, that the Government had had dealings with, and confess that in very many cases

the complaints of the Indians were only too well founded and it is for us to profit by the bitter lessons in Indian matters which experience has taught them. Fortunately for us, we commence our relations with them in the best possible manner; they have to us no hereditary hatreds, no traditions passing from tribe to tribe of broken faith and unfulfilled promises; and it is only necessary for us to determine a policy which will be fair to them, and to convince them that our promises will be rigidly kept, to ensure to us a continuance of the present state of peace which exists.

I am perfectly well aware that a sort of stereotyped opinion prevails throughout the older Provinces that there is no danger of difficulty with the Western Indians, because we have had heretofore no serious difficulty with them in the present settled portions of Canada. I know that the fact of these Indians, American as well as English, almost religiously preserving the medals given to their forefathers in George the Third's time, will be cited as a proof of their hereditary loyalty to the crown, and an argument against the possibility of difficulties; and, while I am prepared to admit that this sentiment among them will make it less difficult to preserve peace, still I warn honorable gentlemen against placing too much reliance on that which is at best but a very intangible idea of the relations between the crown and themselves, and that whenever they are convinced that they have been unfairly dealt with, or, by themselves would express it, "the face of 'Okemagua,' their great mother, has been hid from them," that the feeling of injustice will produce the same results north of the 49th parallel as they have to the south, notwithstanding the sentiment of loyalty to the British Queen which undoubtedly exists. I have cited our Cree nation in connection with the American Sioux, because the lands of that tribe will be first required by the Dominion, and to draw attention to the fact that difficulty with them would be attended with the same appalling results, the same enormous expense as in the case of the war between the United States and the Sioux.

In the determination of an Indian policy, Sir, we have unfortunately very little to gain from past experience. The circumstances under which the Indians of the older Provinces were treated with are utterly different from those of the present day. Then, the advancement of civilization was slow, and the Indian continued to hunt over and enjoy, in many cases for fifty years after, the lands that he was receiving yearly payment for. The process of change was so slow that he scarcely felt it, and when he did, a change of

location to a short distance remedied the evil. These were the days when railroads were not, and when even colonization roads followed instead of preceded the settler. In our day the case is different, and particularly so in a country where farms are made in one year instead of the fifteen which was once necessary in older Canada. Now, the embers of the treaty council fire will scarcely be cool till the Railway Engineer is locating his line, and two years will scarcely pass till the scream of the locomotive will echo where buffalo feed to-day. Here will be no gradual, imperceptible change as with the Indians of the older Provinces; we know that our occupation of the Saskatchewan valley means the disappearance of the buffalo and other prairie animals; we know that to the prairie Indians these animals are more than manna was to the wandering Israelite: Their flesh feeds him, their skins clothe him, and their hides form the house he lives in. The question, then, to consider is: What are we to give him in compensation for his hunting grounds? A railroad we must have; settlers along its line is a natural consequence; and the first step toward this end must be a treaty with the present occupants. Now, Sir, I take it for granted that the Government have as yet decided upon no special policy, that they are willing, perhaps anxious, to hear an expression of the views of this House. It is true that two treaties—those of 1871—have already been made, very much on the same terms as the treaties of the last century; but, Sir, the Papers which I hope to have brought down by the moving of this Address will show that these treaties have not been satisfactory to the Indians, who, through their Head Chief "Miskokanew," the Chiefs Les Grand Oreilles, Yellow Quill and others, have protested against them, and in some cases have refused to receive the stipulated annuity. Briefly stated, these treaties consist of the surrender of 30,000,000 acres of land on the one side, and the payment of an annuity of three dollars per capita, a reserve of land equal to 160 acres to a family of six, some gaudy clothing and a wagon to the Chiefs, and a plough, harrow, and schoolmaster to each reservation. Now, Sir, the sum paid is inadequate to the commonest wants of an Indian! It will not buy him the tobacco he smokes, nor the powder and shot he uses, much less the woolen clothing and covering which the disappearance of the larger animals has necessitated his using.

Let us consider the matter fairly and see whether we would be doing justice to the Indians, in making these treaties the models for all subsequent ones. East of the Rocky Mountains, we have acquired an Indian Territory of three millions square miles; on it

there is a population of sixty-eight thousand Indians; the individual Indian, then in an average treaty, cedes to the Government forty square miles of Country; this forty square miles of Country at present supplies him with his food, his clothing and his house, the smaller fur bearing animals on it, give him the means of acquiring what he need of European manufacture. The moment he concludes a treaty for lands desirable for agricultural or Railroad purposes, but two courses are open to him, either to remain and starve, where once he revelled in plenty, or to totally change his habits and adopt these of the incoming race in wresting from the soil a subsistence. The idea that he can do the latter on a payment of three dollars annually is of course an absurdity, the glaring nature of which is all the more apparent, when we reflect that when we have brought him within the pale of civilization, we compel him to pay about six dollars annually to the State, on the Tobacco he smokes; the Tea that he drinks, and the blankets and clothes that he weaves. The proposition is an absurdity; we take from him his heritage, in the Saskatchewan Valley—say forty square miles to each; we compel him to contribute six dollars yearly towards the State, and we magnanimously propose to pay him three dollars a year for life. Our laws declare him a minor and yet we drive as hard a bargain with him as though he were a land-jobber, and when other arguments have failed to make him accept the terms, we plainly give him to understand in a spirit of civilized barbarity that might is right, and that we will have his lands. Any qualms of conscience on our parts are apt to be satisfied by platitudes about the march of civilization and the domination of the Anglo-Saxon race, judiciously forgetting that it is not so many hundreds of years ago that our British ancestors bore about the same relations to their Roman Invaders that the Indian bears to us, and that we think quite proper, nay, even heroic, their having opposed their naked and tattooed breasts to the advance of the well-armed Romans.

You can trace a melancholy similarity in the reasons which Indian orators give as the cause of their wars and consequent misfortunes. With "Brant" and "Blackhawk," "Pontiac," "Logan," "Powatan," "Tecumseh," and the "Prophet," the cause assigned is the same. It is the same story of the encroachment of the whites; the failing of the game; the inadequate compensation. "Tecumseh" characterizes his nation as "once a happy race made miserable by the white people always encroaching." "Black Hawk" tells us that "he went to the Great Father, and he gave us fair words and great promises, but no satisfaction; there were no deer in the

forest; the opossum and the beaver had fled, and our squaws and papooses starved," and "Red Jacket," a Seneca Chief sums up the argument in one of his great speeches, as follows: "Brothers listen to what I have to say: there was a time when our forefathers owned this Island; their seats extended from the rising to the setting sun: the great spirit made it for the use of the Indians, but an evil day came upon us when the white man crossed the Great Waters, he told us that he was flying from wicked men and wanted a small seat in our country; in pity for them we granted their request and gave them corn and meat while they gave us poison in return; at length their numbers increased, they wanted more land, they wanted our whole country, and at last our eyes were opened."

The Indians treated with in 1871 are dissatisfied with the treaty. Unaccustomed in the interior to the use of money, they formed a very incorrect idea of the value of the bank bills in which they were paid. In the case of the first payment at Fort Francis, on Rainy Lake, they hurried to the Hudson Bay Company's trading establishment at that place to test the value of those strange papers. Soon they found that three dollars only represented three pounds of Tobacco, or two-and-a-half pounds of tea, or five yards of print. Dissatisfaction was the result, and an Indian Chief, in handing back the three dollars he had received, said, "I do not want it; it will take me five years to buy a coat." They found that they could only procure with the money what they could get for a single mink skin, and this band have since refused to treat with the Government.

To me it seems, Sir, that there is only one course open: we must civilize the Indian by weaning him from the chase to the cultivation of the soil. I know that the Americans, after immense appropriations of money to that end, have come to the conclusion that this is impossible; but, Sir, I am proud to say that we have a direct contradiction of their proposition in the numerous settlements of Christian Indians about our missions, where the Indian nature has so far changed as to make him in point of industry, of truthfulness and of obedience, the equal if not the superior of the average white man.

We are bound by the transfer to protect the Indians of the North West; they are consequently at this moment the wards of the Government. While it will be the easiest thing in the world by the adoption of an unwise policy to sow the seeds of an everlasting enmity, yet I hold that it is equally possible by wise measures to retain their friendship even while we are purchasing their lands; that in fact we can economize him, if I may be allowed the expression, while we are protecting him. To do this, I hold that treaties must be made with them on a far more liberal basis than those of 1871. Instead of a perpetual annuity, I would suggest a much larger sum annually, for a stipulated period, say 21 years; instead of a payment in money, I would be in favor of giving him indispensable articles of

European manufacture or growth, and of stipulating that a very large proportion devoted to each band on a reservation, should be applied to the purchase of agricultural implements and oxen; and the payment of native farmers competent to instruct them in cultivating the soil; instead of the present reserve of 160 acres among a family of six, I would suggest at least 160 acres to each individual, and stipulate that the reservation should be situated near some well-known fishing ground, and be far removed as possible from centres of white population and much travelled highways, and lastly, I would expressly stipulate that the most ample provision be made for his education in our language. If Honorable Gentlemen feel that to do this would entail too great a tax on the finances of the country, I would respectfully suggest that a reservation of one section out of each surveyed Township, as in the case of school lands, would by its sale at a time when its value had been enhanced by contiguous settlement, provide a fund which would materially lessen the amount necessary to be appropriated for the Indian Department.

A change from the policy which dictated the treaties of 1871 I hold to be actually necessary. I would regret much to be considered an alarmist, yet I declare from my place in this House my conviction, based on knowledge of the feelings of the Indians, that no more treaties can be made with them on those terms, and it is a question whether, till the existing dissatisfaction of the bands already treated with, be dissipated, they will make a treaty at all.

I have heard it rumored with a very great deal of satisfaction, that the Government propose to manage the Indian affairs of the North West mainly in Manitoba, and that instead of one Commissioner, there will be a board of three, one of whom will be the Governor of Manitoba and the North West Territories; if so, this is a step in the right direction, and I would earnestly suggest that this Board take early steps to enquire into existing causes of dissatisfaction among the Indians who made the treaties of 1871.

In conclusion I would remark that the Indian has had few friends; history has done little else for him than record the deeds which he has done in anger and when smarting under a sense of injustice. Poetry and romance have combined to throw a false glamour around his daily life, and it is only when we can be brought to consider that he is only now what our ancestors were not so very long ago, that he is swayed by the same impulses, governed by the same necessities as ourselves, that we are likely to accord him the justice which is his due. As political economists we are bound to endeavor to prevent his either becoming a scourge or a pauper, and to make of him, if we can, a grain or stock-producing law-abiding citizen of the state; and should we, Sir, by the adoption of a sound Indian policy achieve such a result, I cannot but feel, that when Canada has taken that place among the nations, which her extent, her resources, and her position, will one day entitle her to, we can look back with pride and pleasure to measures which at least have accorded justice, possibly even produced lasting benefit, to a race who upon this continent are now fast passing into History.

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